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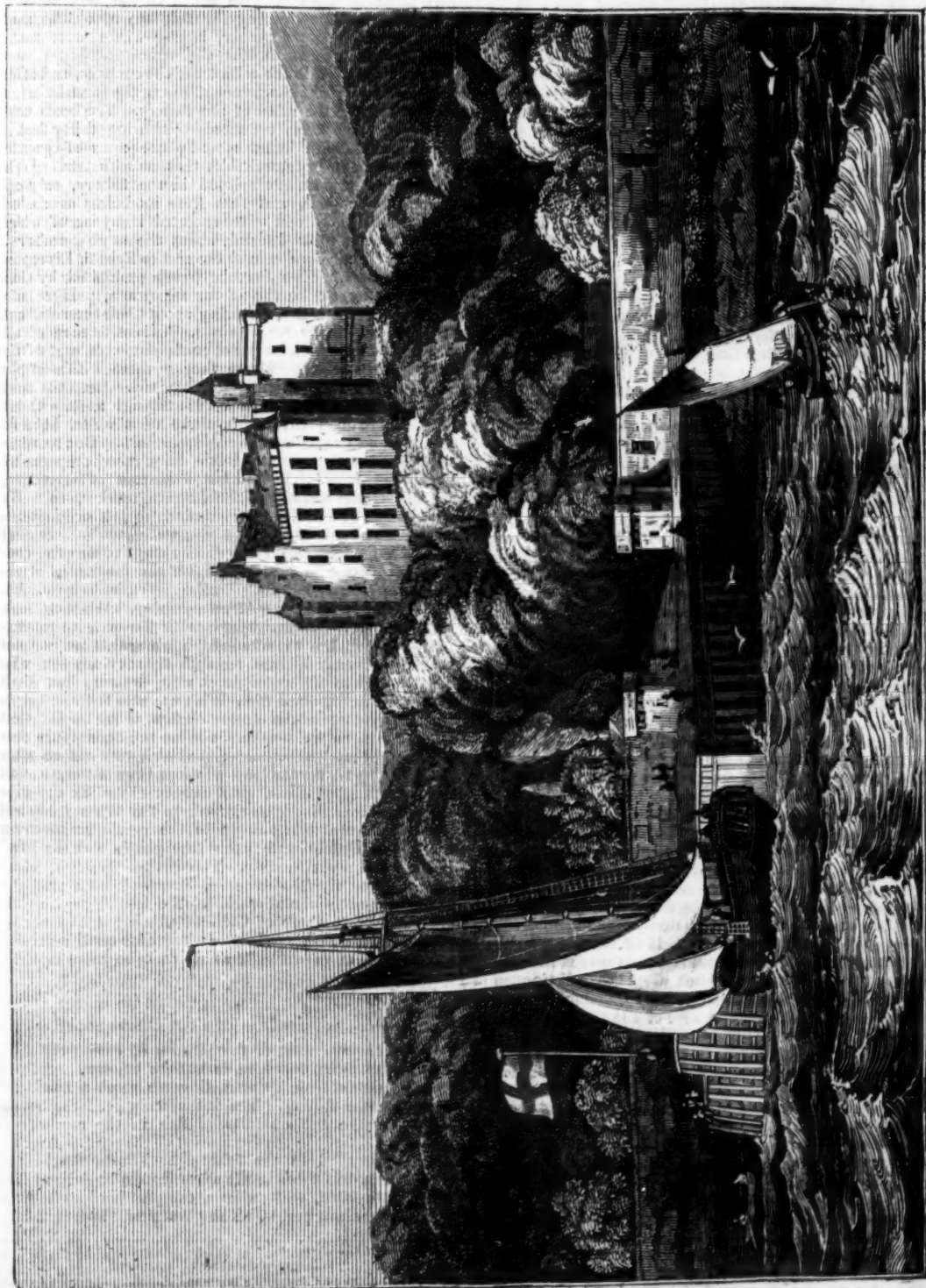
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DUNROBIN CASTLE. SUTHERLANDSHIRE.

SKETCHES OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND.

PART THE EIGHTH.

CAITHNESS; WICK; CHURCH DISCIPLINE; HERRING FISHERY; HEMPRIGGS CASTLE AND STACKS; BERRYDALE.

(A. D. 1837.)

ON Sunday we attended Divine Service twice, at the Parish Kirk at Wick, which, with Pulteney, of more modern date, together form an extensive town at the mouth of a small river. The church, which contains 1200 persons, was very full: the roof needed the support of scaffolding, as the building, though not of many years' standing, is falling; a proof of the ill-judged economy not unfrequently displayed in erecting churches in Scotland. Another, at present unfinished, calculated for 1800 persons, adjoins it. A parliamentary church is building in this parish, near Keiss Castle. The want of church-room in a parish, the population of which amounts to 7000, and receives annually, during the six weeks' continuance of the herring-fishery, a great additional multitude of persons from all parts of Scotland and England, will be in a great measure supplied. The minister is indefatigable in the discharge of all his duties, which require two assistants. His living or stipend amounts to 300*l.* per annum. The congregation was as respectable as numerous.

The ceremony of baptism was performed in the afternoon: the parents presented the child; when the minister delivered to them a solemn exhortation, which, expanding gradually, soon embraced the whole audience. The father, then receiving the child from the mother, placed it in the hands of the minister, who sprinkled water over the face, and then returned it to some women who stood by ready to receive it. The public performance of this ceremony is considered as an honour conferred only on the worthiest parents. The ministers in the country parishes complain of private baptisms as forming one of the most burdensome of their duties.

The minister of Wick, himself exemplary and popular in the discharge of his office, employs the agency placed under his superintendence to much purpose. He assigns a district to each elder, who reports to him any immoral conduct coming under his notice. In cases of drunkenness or female delinquency, the offender is summoned to the church, and publicly reprimanded, whilst the partner of the woman's guilt is compelled to do penance. An old statue of St. Fergus, once an object of idolatrous worship, found in the ruins of an adjoining chapel, has been removed to the church, where its antiquity procures due respect. The chapel itself, of which the four walls remain, is the cemetery of the Caithness family.

The minister considers the strangers, who resort to Wick, during the fishery, a portion of his flock; and preaches in the church-yard in Gaelic, for the benefit of those from the western districts of Scotland. He exerts his utmost efforts to urge the attendance of all at church, and till lately, his injunctions were little heeded by the English, —a circumstance which may be partly accounted for by the difference of the Presbyterian form of worship from their own. The Cornishmen are seldom seen within the sacred walls. The French and Dutch observe no distinction of days in fishing; and the minister has applied for a revenue-cutter to enforce the observance of the Sabbath-day, by breaking the nets of delinquents.

The small river of Wick divides the towns of Wick and Pulteney; on its bank are a new gaol and town-house, which will soon be completed. The suburb, or rather town, of Pulteney, which contains a population of 2000 persons, was erected, together with the adjacent piers and harbours, by the British Fishing Company on a spot which, less than twenty years ago, was the undisturbed abode of sea-fowl. It was chosen as a station well adapted for the herring-fishery: and the most sanguine expectations of its founders have not been disappointed. To Pulteney may be applied the Dutch historian's observation respecting Amsterdam,—that "it was founded on the bones of herrings." The houses are neat, and occupied almost exclusively by the families of persons employed in the taking or curing of the fish.

The fishing seldom lasts more than six weeks, commencing in July: the number of boats employed in it is very great, and amounted this year to no less than twelve hundred, collected from the coasts of Scotland and England. Ten thousand persons were added to the population of Wick and Pulteney, during the fish-season, by the multitude then brought together, among whom were many from Penzance, in Cornwall.

An introduction to the collector of the customs, and other persons, afforded me the means of procuring some information respecting the state of the fishery. The boats used are large, their keels commonly measuring thirty feet in length; and those built recently are even of greater dimensions. It is remarkable, that notwithstanding the great number of them employed in the fishery, only one was lost this year, and that from its being overladen. About 200,000 barrels were exported last year, of which 50,000 were sent to Ireland, about the same number to Leith, 30,000 to London, and the rest to Bristol, Liverpool, and other parts. The French, though prohibited by their laws from purchasing fish of our fishermen, persist habitually in the practice, hovering about their vessels, and exchanging brandy for herrings. This deference of the French to our fishermen is not confined to this part of the coast: it is well known that they purchased fish of the Brixham trawlers on the coast of Devonshire, till their custom-house officers discovered and put a stop to the practice. The profit which these vessels derived from this illicit commerce was, doubtless, considerable; as, since the enforcement of the prohibitory laws, they have removed the scene of fishing to the coast of Kent, about Dover, on account of the vicinity of the London market, to which they were before comparatively indifferent. The fish, when the boat's cargo is completed, are conveyed to curing-houses erected on the pier. The Dutch mode of curing, recommended so zealously by Donovan, the superiority of which arose from carefully gutting and bleeding the fish, and salting and sorting them according to their different qualities, as well as from performing the process on ship-board, immediately on catching the fish, and from the strictness of their custom-house regulations, was deemed too expensive, and requiring too much care, to be used at Wick. The herrings exported from Wick are chiefly intended for the subsistence of the poorer classes of the Scotch and Irish, and for the slaves in the West Indies, whither they are conveyed from Bristol; and their quality is no doubt sufficiently good for the less-fastidious taste of those people. The certainty of these extensive markets for herrings, cured in the ordinary way, renders the Wick fishermen less anxious to secure a share in the continental market, where the Dutch have taught the people to require an article of superior quality. The Scotch fisheries, which have adopted the Dutch mode, have enjoyed a profitable share in the continental market. The Loch Fyne herrings are superior to those of Caithness, being taken earlier, when they are richer and fatter; but these qualities render the curing more difficult, as it must be more speedily effected.

The bounty on well-cured herrings continues, though reduced in amount. The objects proposed by the bounty are twofold:—the general encouragement of the fishery, and the improvement of the process of curing the fish*. The apprehension felt here, is lest the bounty should produce a glut of fish, by attracting too great a number of persons to the fishery. The declared object of the bounty is to increase the quantity of fish in the market: its obvious effect will be the diminution of the price. And the persons engaged in the fishery previous to the bounty, though they will share in the advantage to be derived from the bounty itself, will suffer a comparative loss from the diminution of the profits. The government appear to have

* The opinion entertained at Wick (corroborated by that of the superintendent of a herring-fishery in Sutherlandshire, whom I afterwards visited,) respecting the policy of such a bounty, differs from that I heard expressed by the general superintendent at Edinburgh.

perceived the inexpediency of the system, and propose abandoning it. The second object, the encouragement of a better method of curing the fish, might be attained, as I believe it is in Holland, by merely subjecting the barrels to the inspection of proper officers, who might denote their value by proper marks, and by requiring of those officers the vigilant and exact discharge of their duty. The valuation would necessarily determine the comparative price; and, by raising that of the superior article, thus operate as a bounty.

The curing is performed at Wick by women, affording employment to about 5,000. The rock-salt of Cheshire is imported from Liverpool. The red herrings bear but a small proportion to the rest, being considered only a luxury; they are prepared in houses for the express purpose, hung up and smoked, deriving from this process their rich golden hue.

The harbour was filled with vessels taking in cargoes for exportation. Though commanding every other advantage, it is, unfortunately, accessible to large vessels only at high tide, the depth, at low water, not exceeding six feet. The outer part of the harbour will be rendered safe by the completion of the new pier which is in progress, and will crown the efforts which the company have successfully made, to remove the natural obstructions to the trade of Wick. The expense of this work has been defrayed by harbour dues. The preparation of boats and nets, the fishing, curing, and packing the fish for exportation, afford occupation to the inhabitants of Pulteney during a great part of the year. The land which forms the site of the town is feued of Lord Duffus, at a very high valuation; but infinitely short of that which the noble proprietor would have laid claim to, could he have anticipated the immense profit derived from the letting of the houses. Between the last and the previous census, the population of Caithness-shire, owing partly to the increase of the fishery, was augmented one-third. The sum annually raised and expended on the poor in Wick, is about 70*l.* or 80*l.*, which is found sufficient, though but a fraction when compared to the population.

English is spoken generally throughout Caithness-shire, excepting only the inland and mountainous parts. In those districts, where the Gaelic prevails, about forty out of one hundred were calculated, in the Report of the Inverness Society, to be unable to read; but this number has gradually decreased. The English part of Caithness-shire resembles the Orkneys very much in the extensive diffusion of education, and proves how clearly the deficiency was confined to the Gaelic districts, and how necessary it became to teach the people in their own language.

The residence of the principal landed proprietors of the county on their estates operates as a grand incentive to the progress of all kinds of improvements: and if the western and inland districts of Caithness-shire are boggy and mountainous, the eastern or maritime exhibit a scene of arable culture creditable to the industry of the farmers, and to the superintendence of their landlords. The prosperity of the county, being closely connected with the growth of the herring-fishery, is much indebted to the foreign capital by which that fishery is supported.

Near Wick is Hempriggs Castle, the residence of Lord Duffus: a few trees surround the house, which is large and commodious. The title of Duffus was forfeited by the Dunbar family in the rebellion of 1715, and restored to the immediate predecessor of the present nobleman. The increase of the value of his property, chiefly arising from the growth of the herring fishery, has been very great during the last thirty years. The old residence of the family was Ackergill Castle. The estate belonged originally to Lord Caithness; but was taken from him at the end of the seventeenth century by Lord Breadalbane, who marched into the country, armed with a commission of fire and sword, to recover a debt of which Lord Caithness refused payment. The parties met, and fought a pitched battle. The Sinclairs were defeated: and the event is commemorated in the old well-known song—

The Campbells are coming, the Sinclairs are running.

The adjacent coast, for two miles, exhibits, in a series of bays and coves, much rude grandeur, affording striking proofs of the ravages of the sea; vast fissures, yawning caverns, and insulated rocks: at one spot the sea is seen boiling within a deep well, called the Caldron, to which it gains access by a passage scarcely perceptible between overhanging rocks. The Stacks, or detached rocks of

Hempriggs, are remarkable for their forms and grouping: one of them is united to the coast by a natural, and another, at the entrance of a small bay, by an artificial, bridge: and on its summit, a summer-house is erected. Another is shaped like a coffin, and penetrated lengthways by a passage, through which a boat may make its way. The scenery is highly picturesque. A flock of magnificent goats, perfectly white, were scrambling nimbly along almost invisible paths, on the ledges of the precipices, astonishing us by the extraordinary and desperate agility with which, on being chased by a dog which accompanied us, they descended the steepest cliffs. The coast resumes its ordinary character near the bay of Wick: near this point is the remaining keep of the old Castle of Wick.

The road from Wick southward to Berrydale is along the coast. This village is in the mountainous part of Caithness: its situation is happily chosen at the point at which two deep and well-wooded glens unite with the valley, bounded by lofty hills, through which the river Langwell, receiving the streams which descend from the glens, rolls to the neighbouring sea, washing the rocky base of the old ruined Castle of Berrydale. The glen of Langwell is described as very picturesque. From Wick to Berrydale is twenty-seven miles; good farming, and well-built houses, cheer the view.

The hill district of Caithness-shire, whose highest ridges form the southern boundary of the county, terminate at the coast in the mountain called the Ord, which presents to the sea an assemblage of lofty precipices, along which the road winds.

SUTHERLANDSHIRE; HELMSDALE; PORT GOWER; BRORA; DUNROBIN; GOLSPIC; NEW SYSTEM.

FROM the southern and Sutherlandshire side of the Ord, a prospect of a different character opens to the view; a broad well-cultivated valley, bounded on one side by the sea, and on the other by a ridge, diversified by corn-fields and pastures, enclosed by neat fences; excellent farm-houses, surrounded by clumps of tall trees; well-built cottages and gardens; and at the foot of the mountain, the little town of Helmsdale, and principal station of the Marquis of Stafford's herring fishery, on the river of the same name: a scene which, in the midst of rugged rocks and dreary wilds, reminds the Englishman of his own more favoured land, and affords, when contrasted with the dreary and barren aspect which it presented a few years ago, a striking proof of the magical power of well-directed enterprise, and well-employed capital. Helmsdale, built on a spot occupied formerly by a few huts, consists of a good inn, several respectable houses and shops, and no less than ten large houses for curing fish. The women were busily employed in the process, preparing with surprising rapidity the cargo for the vessels which lay in the harbour. The harbour is accessible to large vessels only at high water. As a fishing-station, Helmsdale is preferred even to Wick. The Marquis of Stafford* has a distillery here, and another at Brora, in both of which, the small-still system, producing finer whisky, has been successfully introduced. Port Gower, two miles south of Helmsdale, a long street of tiled cottages, and Brora, between Port Gower, and Golspic, a small town, with neat shops, and a small harbour, date their existence from the same period as Helmsdale: the latter place possesses a small fishery. Near to it some iron foundries have been constructed on the bank of the stream. The coast of Sutherlandshire is low, and the southern prospect is bounded by a long line of coast terminating in the promontory of Tarbet Ness, forming the southern side of the Firth of Dornock. The vista of newly-erected towns, villages, farms, and fishing-establishments, which line the coast, is at length terminated by the *policy* or park of Dunrobin, in the midst of which, enclosed by forest-trees and rising plantations, stands the castle, the ancient baronial residence of the earls of Sutherland.

The success of the Marquis of Stafford's experiment, in removing his tenants from their miserable abodes, and precarious subsistence, in the interior of the country, to the coast, has gradually subdued the animadversions of the opponents of his system. If the transfer produced no benefit either to landlord or tenant, and served only to make a forced display of population and wealth, like the moveable villages which marched with Catherine, during her progress through the Russian dominions, and were drawn up to receive her when she halted, no

* The late Duke of Sutherland.

reply can be given to the heavy charge which has been brought against Lord Stafford, of having unnecessarily severed all the ties which bind man, and especially the Highlander, to his birth-place, his employments, and the inseparable associations, and of having compelled him to change his habits as well as his residence, and to adopt occupations for which, if not in youth, he was probably altogether unqualified. But before we adopt such a conclusion, let us consider, impartially, the state of this country when Lord Reay, whose estate comprises the three western parishes, and afterwards, Lord Stafford*, proprietor of the greater part of the remainder of the county, commenced the change in question.

Sutherlandshire consists chiefly of vast mountainous ridges, intersected by deep and broad valleys or straths. These straths, and the sides of the hills, were formerly thinly peopled by a peasantry occupying miserable huts, or grouped together in small hamlets, possessing at most a small patch of cultivated land, a cow, or a few sheep; often destitute even of these comforts, and tempted to eke out a dubious subsistence by sheep-stealing, illicit distillation, and the bounty of the landlords, who were compelled to supply them with large gratuitous donations of meal. To the tenant, such a condition offered no prospect but that of wretchedness and inducement to crime, which no moral checks would probably counteract, whilst the cause remained: to the landlord it threatened progressive losses, terminating in ruin. And yet over such accumulating evils the thin veil of poetic illusion was spread; and the public, whose humane feelings and national prejudices had been roused by erroneous and exaggerated representations, pictured to themselves in the wilds of Sutherlandshire scenes of romantic bliss and pastoral innocence, and regarded with indignation the tyranny which, instigated, as it was supposed, by covetousness, tore those happy highlanders from their paternal seats, and consigned their land to devastation. To such a people, if our conclusions, stated in a former part of these Sketches, were just, emigration to America would have proved a blessing. Lord Reay had adopted it upon his estate to a limited extent, but at length preferred the plan which, afterwards, the Marquis of Stafford adopted and pursued almost exclusively, of removing his tenants from the interior of the country to the coasts, which afforded better and more cultivable land, fisheries, and greater facility of intercourse. No social ties were severed but those which crime had bound, as the people were moved in clans: and though the Highlander, to whom might be justly applied the generous sentiment of the poet, that

..... the tempest and the torrent's roar
But bind him to his native mountains more,

would feel a severe pang at bidding farewell to his hereditary haunts, yet he would have evidently yielded to the dictates of good sense, manly feeling, and the prospect of an honest livelihood, had he not been bound to his sequestered haunts by the love of indolence, or of wild liberty, or of lawless and predatory adventure. Better-grounded objections to the change would, no doubt, be justly made by those unaccustomed to maritime pursuits: but age was admitted as a reasonable plea of exemption; the fishery requiring only a portion of the colony. The Marquis's agents were accused, but unjustly, of forcing civilization upon the people too summarily, and of harsh measures in the execution of their scheme; and, in one instance, of firing a house, which the inhabitants refused to quit, which became a subject of legal inquiry. The tenants were, on the other hand, charged with refractory and turbulent conduct†.

That the experiment has been justified by the result, no doubt can be entertained. It is true, that the state of the population in the different parishes of the estate, at the present period, and at that previous to the introduction of the new system, exhibits, though varying in its details, the same

* The ancient patrimony of the Sutherland family was small. During the last century, it gradually increased by the addition of the estates of lesser independent proprietors, and having recently absorbed by purchase, Lord Reay's property, comprehends nearly the whole county. By the elevation of the Marquis of Stafford to the Dukedom of Sutherland, a title the most ancient in Scotland, and during many generations invested with almost regal dignity, has been preserved.

† I was informed at Edinburgh, by the then sheriff of the county of Sutherland, that the rumours originated in groundless apprehension; and that, though he had ordered a regiment to be in readiness in a neighbouring county, he had never any occasion for its services.

total, amounting to 15,000. But the better condition, the superior comforts and advantages, the moral improvement of the present peasantry, and their exemption from many crimes to which they were before addicted, prove that the benefits which they have derived from the removal are incalculable. To the landlord, the change will be ultimately equally advantageous, though hitherto, perhaps, he has scarcely indemnified himself for the great original outlay. He receives increased profits from the additional or improved resources of his own estate; and is not compelled to waste his income in supporting a wretched tenantry, or in bolstering up a defective and vicious system. The germ of future revenue is, however, rapidly developing itself, and the nation is benefited by the moral as well as economical improvement.

One manifest amendment has already taken place:—that resulting from the substitution of legal whisky, produced by the stills erected for the illicit spirit formerly distilled and consumed on his estate; which could have been only partially effected, and with considerable difficulty and expense, had the peasantry remained in their old unfrequented wilds. The perpetuity of that system of order, neatness, and cleanliness, which now prevails, being certainly repugnant to the natural habits of the people, will depend upon the personal superintendence and perseverance of those who may hereafter succeed to the management of the estate. At present, they are completely reconciled to it, and vie with each other in embellishing their houses: new generations are advancing, and new habits are formed; and the majority of the settlers would probably return with much greater aversion to their former poverty, and precarious habits, than they felt in originally renouncing them.

The approach to the Castle is ornamented by a stately avenue. On this side, this ancient building presents a somewhat shapeless mass, constructed on so defensive a plan, as to exclude not only the shafts of an enemy, but the rays of the sun. The family arms are sculptured over the door. The absence of the noble proprietor and his lady, who had proceeded southward a short time before, rendered a letter of introduction unavailing. The castle is on the plan of Dunvegan, but larger: it was built at different times from the thirteenth century. The apartments are small and commodious, and well protected from the winds. They contain some old furniture, arms, and ancient memorials. The tower commands an extensive view of the surrounding park and plantations, the amphitheatre of high hills which embrace it, the sea, and the line of coast.

Golspie, another of the villages erected by the Duke, borders on the south side of the park, and contains a new and respectable inn, at which I passed Sunday. At the parish-church, a chapter of the Old Testament, and one of the New, were read; an unusual practice of the Highland Churches.

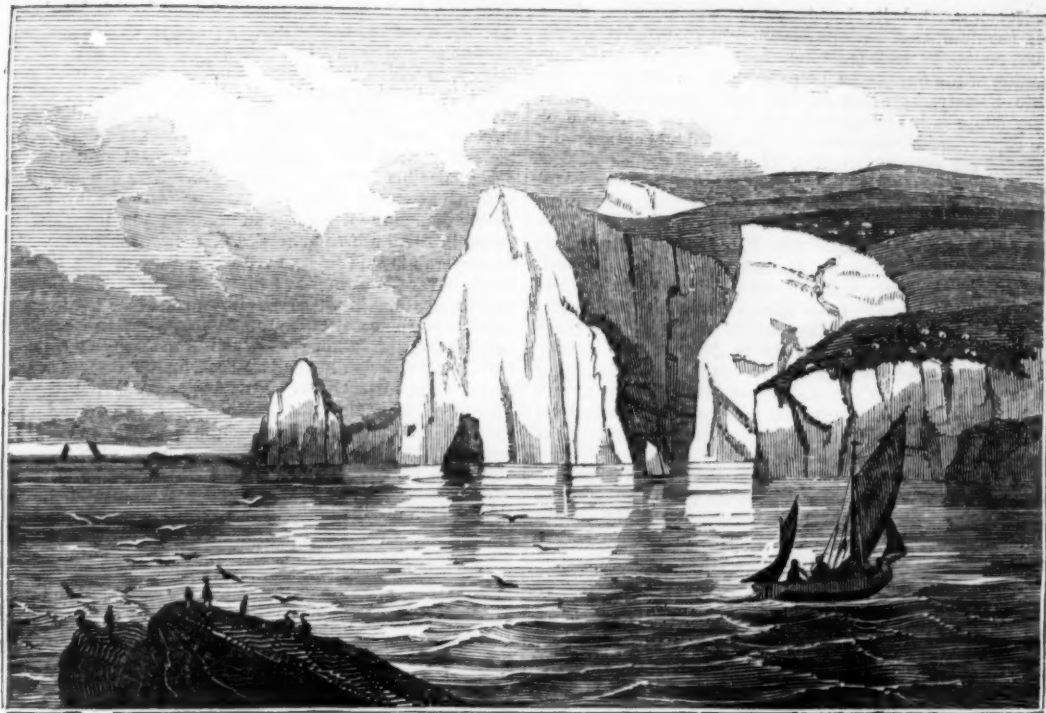
The houses of Golspie are occupied by tradesmen and labourers, with the exception of a few fishermen, who inhabit inferior buildings. The profits arising from the personal attendance of the landed proprietor are nowhere more apparent than in this neat and well-ordered village, which contained, thirteen years ago, only two houses.

The same number also constituted, at that time, Brora, which is now well peopled.

The surface of the park is pleasantly varied by knolls and dells, ornamented by plantations, and rendered accessible by walks. The castle occupies a commanding situation, in the midst of the finest trees of the park, on the edge of a steep ridge, overlooking the sea, and a small pier, affording safe shelter to vessels of moderate burden. The inaptitude of the Highlands to the growth of timber is disproved, as much by the success which, except in particularly-exposed districts, has attended the modern plantations, as by the remains of its ancient forests.

SUTHERLANDSHIRE; DORNOCH; TAIN; SKIBO; TONGUE;
WHITENHEAD; LOCH-ERIBOL; RISPON; HERRING-
FISHERY; SEAL-FISHERY.

THE southern road crosses, by a recently-raised dyke, the entrance of Loch-Fleet, a deep bay, round which the road formerly wound, making a circuit of several miles. On an opposite ridge, appear the plantations of Skelbo, a seat of the Marquis of Stafford. The farm is said to be conducted in very superior style. The road is all along adorned with natural wood.



WHITEN HEAD LOCH ERIBOL.

Dornoch, the county-town of Sutherlandshire, contains an old cathedral, now used as a parish-church—a square and lofty building; and an old castle, converted into a gaol, and town-house. The place is fast declining, and exhibits a desolate appearance on the shore of the Firth which bears its name. The town of Tain, another royal borough, lies on the opposite shore of the Firth. A little above Tain, the Firth diminishes in breadth, and winds far inland, affording safe anchorage to shipping, when they have been so fortunate as to make good their entrance, a work of risk and difficulty, except at high water. The mansion of Skibo stands near its northern shore, on a broad and well-planted plain, sheltered from the north winds by high trees.

From Skibo, I shaped my course to the north-west coast of Sutherlandshire. The iron bridge of Bonar is the wonder of the country. Two roads diverge hence from the grand route; one to Assynt, not yet finished, visible for some miles, pursuing its course by the sides of a river, along a broad strath, passing Ross Hall, the seat of Lady Ashburton; and the other to Tongue. A river, flowing through woods and plantations, enlivens the immediate vicinity of the road to Lairgs, but all beyond is moorland, hill, and dale. Lairgs consists of a hamlet and small inn, on the bank of Loch Shinn, a long narrow sheet of water, the principal link in a chain of lakes, which, forming a regular communication between the Firth of Dornoch and Loch Laxford, on the western coast thus insulate the northern extremity of the island.

Three ponies, sent forward by Mr. Dempster of Skibo, met me here; and I proceeded the first stage, twenty miles of brown straths and mountains, to a solitary inn, near Loch Naver, which lies in the strath of the same name. From this, and an adjacent strath, were removed part of the population now collected on the coast. Here were experienced, in their full extent, the ravages of the new system. Here, Goldsmith might have laid the scene of his *Deserted Village*, could he have found a vestige of the former inhabitants. But, unfortunately for such pathetic lamentations, the banished colony are dwelling on the opposite side of the neighbouring range of mountains, in a state of comparative ease, prosperity, and comfort, happily contrasted with their former poverty and degradation.

The road, still excellent, passes through a similar wilderness, till within a few miles of Tongue, when it enters a pass between Loch Layghall (Layal pronounced) on the right, and Ben Layghall on the left, a long and lofty ridge, terminating in jagged peaks, more Alpine and picturesque in their form than any other which I had seen in Scotland,

except those of Sky, Ben Stromena, and Arran. the other side of the lake is less grand. The scenery of the pass, for several miles along the western shore of this and another smaller lake, is striking. From a steep hill, Tongue becomes visible at the head of its bay. The road is overshadowed by the majestic cliffs of Ben Layghall.

I breakfasted next morning at the Manse. The meal commenced, as usual in this part of the country, with the dram. The minister, Mr. Mackenzie, rivals his Orkney brethren in longevity, being in his ninetyeth year. He has a brother residing near Dornoch, still hale, *ten years older than himself*. He has held his present situation, as minister of Tongue, during sixty years: in his eighty-second year, he performed, on foot, the journey of Assynt, which is one of the roughest in Scotland. His memory supplies an inexhaustible fund of anecdote. Zealous for his church, and liberal in his disposition, he has educated his son and also his nephews for the ministry. The former now assists his father, uniting the functions of physician with that of minister, as no medical advice is to be had nearer than Thurso or Tain. But the old minister has not wholly relinquished his duties: he still preaches twice on Sunday, and attends the school on other days. His parish, and the neighbouring parishes of Diurness and Edderachillis, together, comprehend the whole of Lord Reay's property. The population of Tongue received an additional third from the interior, at the removal of the natives. Mr. Mackenzie spoke judiciously of the effect of the change of system, admitting, whilst he evidently exhibited symptoms of the displeasure with which he had regarded its introduction, that the people were now quite reconciled to it, and that a moral change and improvement had taken place amongst them, which could not have been otherwise expected. They were happy now, he said, but they were also, he added, happy in their former lot. But their contentment, at that time, depended very much on a source to which it is obvious that no tenantry ought habitually to look,—the large gratuitous supplies of meal, which, he acknowledged, Lord Reay was compelled to afford them, as their scanty and precarious crops were frequently destroyed by the frosts. As new settlements were not provided for all who were removed, a portion of the ejected tenants, as has been already stated, emigrated to America. He spoke with great enthusiasm of the moral change which had taken place in his parish, attributing it in a great measure to the formation of various schools, and the circulation of the Scriptures. He believed that every person in the parish could now read. If this be the fact, the progress of instruction since 1822, when the Inverness

Society instituted its inquiries, at which period above half the number of persons above eight years of age were found unable to read, must have been rapid. For the circulation of the Scriptures, he called down blessings on the Bible Society, by which he had been liberally supplied: every house in his parish was now furnished with one or two copies, besides catechisms. He stated that every family observed the excellent practice of assembling for domestic worship, reading the Scriptures, and singing psalms. And he believed that he had only two habitual drunkards in his parish.

A small river descending from Ben Layghall flows into the Kyle, or Bay of Tongue, beneath a low but steep precipice, a little above the village; and on the point are the ruins of an old castle. Lord Reay's house, or rather cottage, is prettily situated in the midst of forest-trees, near the shore of the Kyle. A field in front of the cottage would make an admirable site for a mansion, commanding a fine view of the castle at the upper part of the bay, and of Ben Layghall, towering proudly in the distance; and, on the other side, of the islands, which obstruct the entrance of the bay, and break the line of ocean.

My aged host accompanied me to the boat destined to convey me to Loch Eribol, and gave me his benedictions at parting.

The Kyle of Tongue is inaccessible to vessels at low water; and, even at high tide, the entrance is rendered somewhat precarious by the islands, shifting as well as fixed, and the sand-banks. Our boat got aground more than once. The coasts are low and tame; but grow bolder and more elevated as the bay opens, and present, on both sides, projecting headlands, which group well with the numerous islands. The coast to westward is very rugged, and terminates in the huge, and, on this side, ruddy, promontory of Whitenhead. A fair breeze bore us to this point, and we perceived, immediately, a round massy white pile of cliffs, separated from that which first came into view by a narrow, dark, and intricate inlet, winding amid a cluster of spiral rocks of the same chalky hue, and guarded at its entrance by two pyramids of great height: a double headland, uniting the diverse characteristics of stupendous size, various form, singular grouping, and contrasted colour, in a degree, perhaps, unequalled in any other part of the British coasts. A third peak of the same whiten hue, which distinguishes the coast for a considerable distance, rises to westward. The Whiten Head owes much of its highly picturesque formation to the violence of the sea during the north-west gales, by which it has been in many places deeply excavated. I rowed into the largest of the caves, admiring its vast overarching roof, exhibiting a sort of mosaic, of the richest brown, yellow, red, and green colours, blending their tints, and chequered by the dim reflected rays admitted through the apertures, into which the waves tumbled heavily, chafing and moaning in hoarse cadence along the echoing walls of their spacious prison. To my disappointment, it was untenanted by its usual inhabitants, the seals; its sole possessors being a large flock of young scarts, or cormorants, which started from a snug lurking-place, and swam forth in procession past us, apparently perfectly tame, forming a very graceful little flotilla, as their shape and motion, while swimming, is very elegant. The green colour of the birds is much brighter, and the beak much yellower in the young, than in the full-sized. They breed in great numbers in the caves of this coast.

The Whiten Head is the eastern headland of Loch Eribol, an extensive bay of about ten miles in length, accessible to the largest vessels in any state of the tides, affording good anchorage, and a convenient retreat to the numerous fishing vessels employed in the adjacent seas. It is the only haven, on this formidable coast, for the ships engaged in the Baltic and other trades, between Cape Wrath and Duncansby Head, as the Scrabster Roads in Thurso Bay, are unsafe during a north-wind. Ben Hope, on the south-eastern side of Loch Eribol, is a fine mountain, on the bank of a fresh-water lake of the same name.

We crossed Loch Eribol to Ripson, an opposite cove, within which we found a receptacle which the inhospitable and uninhabited aspect of the coast gave us little reason to expect, consisting of a snug and safe haven for small vessels; a good house and adjoining offices; and a vessel undergoing repairs on the beach; and, protected on all sides from the sweeping winds, a fishing establishment, formed by Mr. Anderson, who gave me a hearty welcome. Ripson affords a striking instance of the success of well-directed speculation. It is four years

since Mr. Anderson commenced fishing in this lonely spot. He has a commodious dwelling; and a curing-house for the fish adjoining it. His principal object is the herring-fishery, in which he employs two sloops, each from forty to fifty tons, besides many boats: he had twenty in his service last year, each manned by four men. His attention is directed chiefly to the *early rich herrings* of the deep, and he commences his operations on the 1st of June, and despatches his first cargo on the 4th. The fish are at this season extremely fat; the garbage which they contain nearly equals the fish itself in weight: the principal food found in them are sand-eels, and their own young. The soldier-crab is said to be a common food of the herring; but is never discovered in fish taken here. In a more advanced season, in July, for instance, when fishing commences on the coast of Caithness-shire, and in Loch Fyne, the fish become full of spawn, and proportionably thin. As the Dutch also fish in the late season, the early fish experience little molestation. Mr. Anderson is not the only individual who embarks in this early fishing. Another spirited individual, Mr. Macdonald, who has an establishment at Loch Inver, on the western coast of Sutherland-shire, has also prosecuted, with success, the early fishery. This gentleman, last year, gained the premium at Ham-burgh, offered for the first fish brought to port, and sold his barrels for £13. each. Mr. Anderson sold, last year, 1200 barrels of the *early*, and 1000 of the *later* fishery; the former at £4. or £5. each; the latter at about £1.; so great is the preference given to the former. Each barrel contains between 700 and 900 fish. He encourages the men employed by offering them a bounty of £1. for every barrel of the early fish which they catch, and this, as might be expected, attracts many candidates for the employment: no less than forty boats tendered their services last year, a number double of that which he required. The employment which this fishing-establishment affords to the labouring classes, is one of the greatest advantages resulting from it. People from the mountains, as well as the coast, flock to it.

Mr. Anderson adopts the Dutch mode of preparing the early fish or the market, as explained by Donovan, and with the utmost success: as they require so much care that the inferior process used at Wick and other parts of Scotland would be wholly inapplicable. The greatest attention is paid to the proper cleansing and packing the fish. Every particle of unnecessary matter is removed; and the fish are so closely packed as to exclude air: and, as the cleansing is so complete as to remove all matter that would generate noxious effluvia very little salt is necessary. The fish are, when packed, laid on their backs, not on their sides; and the barrels are of oak-wood: those used at Wick are chiefly of birch, produced from the coppices on the western coast. The frequent visits of the smacks, which resort to Loch Eribol, afford constant and ready communication with the London market. Mr. Anderson objected to the bounty, for the same reason which prevailed at Wick; its tendency to attract adventurers to the fishery, unacquainted with the process of curing, adopting the practice of packing the fish in the open air, and endeavouring to correct the ill effects produced by sun and rain, by large quantities of salt; defects not likely to be corrected by the officers of government, as they are apt to perform the office of examination hastily and ignorantly.

There are salmon-fisheries in Loch Hope, and in the open sea, about twenty miles from the coast; and Mr. Anderson's observations induce him to suppose that these fish breed in the sea; that is, doubtless, on banks and in bays, like the herrings. The prevalence of salmon produces a corresponding abundance of their destructive enemies the seals. These animals breed in immense numbers, on a small rocky island off this coast, called The Stacks of Skerries. Mr. Anderson despatches a vessel annually there for the purpose of slaughtering them. On the centre of the island is a lake, on the banks of which the seals are found basking in multitudes, accompanied by their young. As soon as they are alarmed by the prospect of their enemies, they congregate, form a body, and scuttle away across the land to the sea; and to venture to oppose their march, and to attack them in front, would be fatal to the rash assailant who should attempt it. The men divide, and charge the retreating column on both flanks with large sticks. A blow on the nose of the seal, the only vulnerable part of this animal, instantly destroys him. Nets are also used, though the mode is more expen-

sive, in catching these animals: when entangled in the meshes, they find escape impossible; usually become enraged, and fall to tearing each other to pieces.

Mr. Anderson joins in the universal complaint, of the idle and loitering habits of the country-people; of their preference of jobs to regular work; and of their practice of relapsing, when possessed of a little money, the produce of occasional fits of industry, into their wonted indolence, till their money is spent. It is found necessary to procure workmen for the roads from the lowlands of Caithness and Sutherland, who, separated from old habits and connexions, and anxious to acquire as much by their industry as possible, prove valuable labourers.

The practice of illicit distillation in this part of the country, has been suppressed by the establishment of the Marquis of Stafford's distilleries. The removal of those colonies which partly depended upon it for subsistence, from their sequestered haunts, is one obvious reason. The bad example of strangers has no influence in tempting the people to break the excellent rule of abstaining from fishing on Sunday.

The harbour of Loch Eribol frequently exhibits a scene of bustle strikingly contrasted with the dreariness of its shores. About seventy vessels, detained by the western gale, had just cleared out of it for the southward. Mr. Anderson was engaged in repairing his sloop. The materials were furnished him by a wreck which occurred here lately; the crew having escaped in a remarkable manner. The inhabitants of Rispon were all eye-witnesses of the catastrophe. They observed, during a heavy gale from the north-west, a vessel in distress, with her sails partly set, as she was water-logged, and the crew could not manage her, rapidly approaching the harbour, and on the point of striking upon a small island opposite to Rispon. The crew, perceiving that destruction would be inevitable, if they remained in the vessel, betook themselves, just before she struck, to their boat, altogether nine in number. The captain stood at the stern, holding a cask of oil, which he sprinkled on the waves to allay their fury*. The vessel was instantly shattered to fragments, and the boat, contrary to the expectation of all on shore, who expected its momentary disappearance, arrived safely. Mr. Anderson received most hospitably the crew, who proved to be Swedes.

LORD REAY'S FOREST; CAVE OF SMO; DIURNNESS; LOCHS INCHARD AND LAXFORD; SCOURIE; ISLE OF MANDA.

As the length of this day's walk was little less than forty miles, across an exceedingly rough tract of country, as those well know who have traversed it, it was necessary to start at day-break, to avoid being benighted in a cheerless and houseless wilderness.

The coast, along which we walked, is very rough, but not lofty. We passed two villages inhabited by fishermen, colonized by people from the interior. Each cottage had its plot of ground, on which vegetables were raised. One of these villages was situated in much better soil than the other. In consideration of the difference, the tenants of the one pay each £3. rent per annum; the inhabitants of the other were allowed their possessions rent-free during the first seven years; and are now paying 30s. rent. They have good reason to rejoice in their change of situation. Their wages amount to two shillings per day; and their food consists of fish, potatoes, eggs, milk, and some meal. So inadequate is this portion of Scotland to supply its own consumption of meal, that Lord Reay imports annually to the value of £1000., which he sells to the people upon his estate, at the original cost.

Near the coast, a mountain-torrent descending to the sea, tumbles into a deep hole, and pursues its course through a subterranean passage, a hundred yards in length, into a large chasm called the Cave of Smo, enclosed by precipitous rocks, forming a small cove which embays the sea. The bed of the torrent must be reached by scrambling up the rock side, and entering through a hole in the side of the cave. Sir Walter Scott, as the people relate, performed this feat, notwithstanding his lameness, and explored the dark recess, a fit retreat for a Balfour, or Dirk Hatteraick.

The minister of Diurnness and his lady waited breakfast at the Manse, and expressed great surprise at my refusing to join them in the previous dram. The population of this

parish had been diminished by sheep-farming; and the destruction of the middle class of tenants was the evil complained of. The minister's account of the moral and religious state of his parish, the accuracy of which may be fully concluded from his known attention to his pastoral duties, agreed with that which Mr. Mackenzie had given me of Tongue. He stated that every family in his parish assembled daily for the purpose of prayer: his knowledge of the neighbouring parish of Edderachillis led him to believe that the practice was equally general there; as, indeed, it was throughout this part of the country. Sailing and fishing on Sunday were unknown. The minister acknowledged with gratitude the liberality of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in consequence of an application which he had made for copies of the Scriptures, grounded on the liability of the dangerous coasts of his parish (including Cape Wrath,) to shipwrecks, and the opportunity afforded of thus supplying destitute mariners with the Word of God. He had twice provided foreign crews, unfortunately cast upon his shores, with copies of the Scriptures,—that of the Swedish vessel wrecked in Loch Eribol, and that of a Danish vessel which was stranded in a storm, near the Manse. He received all on board of the latter, at his house, but could not make himself understood by them: at length, discovering their nation, he placed in their hands a copy of the Danish Bible, and observed surprise and delight gleaming from their sorrowful countenances, at the sight of their native character, and gratitude on their lips for the sacred boon.

The Manse and Hamlet of Diurnness are situated near a bay, forming part of the Kyle of Diurnness, a long and narrow arm of the sea, the greater part of which has become, owing to the receding of the waters, a mere sand-drift. The sheep-farms in the neighbourhood are large.

From Diurnness we proceeded to the head of Loch Inchard, —sixteen miles,—soon reaching a gradual and tedious ascent of a boggy pass between two high ridges. The eastern, which is steep and bare, is the most northern point in that long range of mountains, seen from the Minsh, and though not of the conical and picturesque form, which distinguishes many of the others, is remarkable for its height, extent, and wintry bleakness. This district abounds in deer. A well-known cave is a favourite resort of the stalkers, who bring their bedding and provisions, and spend days in chasing their prey over the adjoining ridges. The country is very dreary.

Passing the head of Loch Inchard, we reached the shore of Loch Laxford,—about two miles from the head, to which point we scrambled along ledges of rock, and beds of shingle. The harbour of this bay is superior to that of Loch Inchard: its coasts are loftier, and it is embraced by a grand semi-circular range of mountains, of which the high ridges to north-east, and the sugar-loaf peak of the Stack to southward, form the principal features. We reached the bank of the river which rolls into Loch Laxford,—a broad and rapid torrent; and found some trouble in fording it, as it was leg deep, and the bottom, being covered with very slippery sea-weed, rendered the footing unsafe, whilst a fall might have been irrecoverable. However, we, providentially, met with no casualty, and soon entered the district between this lake and Loch Scourie, which is without exception the most rugged, and least practicable which I had seen in Scotland. It is broken into a multitude of hills, so frequent that the route consists of a constant series of steep ascents and descents: the lakes in the hollows between the hills are equally numerous, and the ledges afforded by their precipitous banks often form the only pathway. The prospect is much contracted by the intersecting ridges. The scenery from about mid-way between Lochs Inchard and Laxford, to about a mile beyond Loch Laxford, displays considerable grandeur. Fully aware that no time was to be lost, the Highlander carrying my bag, who had been very dilatory at first, and required much urging, pushed nimbly forward at the bog-trot, breaking his silence only to ask whether I made a practice of travelling on Sunday, observing with great energy, that a guinea would not induce any man in the country to carry my bag on that day. We found very comfortable quarters at a farm-house at Scourie.

Next morning I found the hostess's little boy, a hardy mountaineer, about five or six years of age, diligently studying my map: he was a proficient in geography, and already knew the name of every mountain in the neighbourhood. We were joined at breakfast by the assistant minister of the parish of Edderachillis, on whom the whole

* I have been told by a captain of an East India Company's vessel, that, when sailing with whale-ships, he has observed the sea in their wake perfectly smooth; whilst in that of the other ships in their company it was much agitated.

duty devolves. He confirmed the statements which I had already received, of the universality of the practice of family prayers, and observed that though the influence of strangers introduced by the sheep-farmers, and especially the habits of Sunday-travelling amongst those and the English, had certainly proved prejudicial to the religious habits of the people, the effect had been partial. This gentleman conversed on the subject of the Gaelic language, of which he is a thorough master, and spoke of a bard who died about thirty years ago, a native of Diurness, who "warbled his native wood-notes wild," amidst the savage scenery of the Derry-moor Forest. His poetry, like that of Burns, which it is said to have much resembled, was both of the satirical and of the lighter kind. Of the former, a large collection has been made, and will probably be published*. Of the latter, one was mentioned as displaying much wit. The scene was laid in a dark and rugged heath, on the confines of Ben Hope; and the subject was the mutual complaints of husbands and wives, whose quarrels afforded the poet fine scope for his talent; and the arbiter was a god, placed on the summit of the mountain.

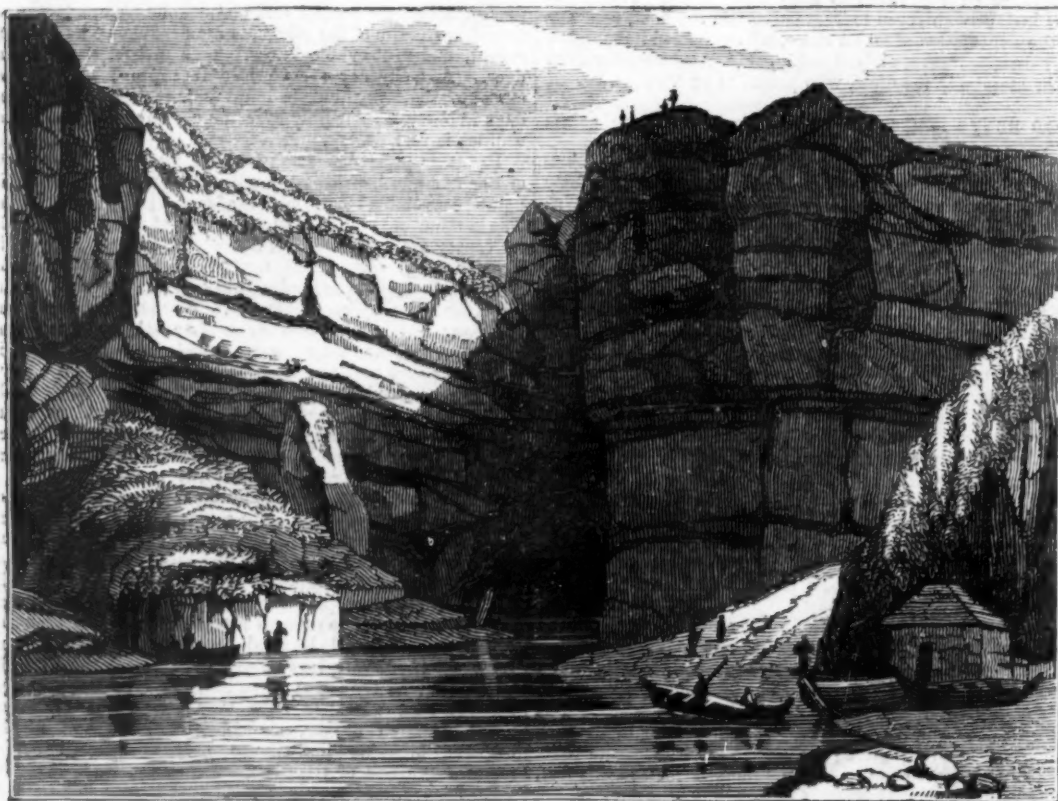
The village of Scourie consists of three or four good houses, and several huts inhabited by the people removed from the interior. I took a boat in the cove of Scourie to visit the neighbouring Isle of Handa. Its western coast exhibits much grandeur, consisting of a range of high black rocks, perforated by deep caverns, and broken into insulated fragments, picturesque in their forms and grouping. The highest point of the island affords, perhaps, the best station off this coast for surveying the magnificent rampart of mountains which the western coast of Sutherland opposes to the swell of the Atlantic. The outwork on the edge of the sea, though not lofty, is very rugged and precipitous; and its continued line to southward is broken by a numerous cluster of islands, beyond which

the promontory of Rhu Stoir stretches far to westward. This headland is distinguished by a needle-rock, shaped like an obelisk, somewhat detached from it. The rocks, which guard the entrance of Loch Laxford, impart a bolder character to the coast to northward; and the bleak and lofty heights rising beyond them, and the sugar-loaf hill of Assynt to southward, and several other intermediate peaks, form a continued, but irregular chain, extending at least seventy miles in length, towering above a wilderness of subordinate ridges, piled on one another in chaotic confusion. Partial gleams illuminated the tops of the nearer ridges, heightening by contrast the dark gloom cast over the higher and more distant by a canopy of black clouds, which reposed in stillness on their summits without obscuring their picturesque outline.

The rocks of Handa are frequented by vast multitudes of sea-fowl during the season. A shepherd inhabiting the only dwelling in the island, takes charge of the few cattle which it rears. A very amusing circumstance, incidental to insular life, happened to this man last Christmas: he had invited at that unfavourable season, a numerous party of friends from the adjoining coast to the wedding of his daughter, and provided for their entertainment an ample feast,—plenty of whisky, and a piper to promote the general merriment. The guests soon became too busy to mind the brewing of a storm, which at length rendered it impossible for any boat to quit the shore. The only accommodations on the island were a cottage and an out-house, into which bridegroom, bride, and guests crowded hastily, and passed five tedious days and nights. Whilst the whisky lasted, they submitted with tolerable resignation to their fate, but when this resource failed, they began to contemplate, with unmitigated horror, the prospect of exhausted provisions, and received no comfort from the unavailing exertions of the poor piper. Had the storm lasted much longer, the marriage-feast might have had a tragic close.

P. S. Q. R.

* They have since been published; the poet's name was Robert Mackay.—See *Quarterly Review*, No. LXXXIX. Art. 2.



CAVE OF SMO, SUTHERLANDSHIRE.